GROUP OF GOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON PROHIBITIONS OR RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF CERTAIN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS WHICH MAY BE DEEMED TO BE EXCESSIVELY INJURIOUS OR TO HAVE INDISCRIMINATE EFFECTS

CCW/GGE/II/WP.10
15 July 2002

Original: ENGLISH

Second Session
Geneva, 15-26 July 2002

Group of Governmental Experts on Explosive Remnants of War

Explosive Ordnance Disposal from a field and donor perspective

Prepared at the request of the Co-ordinator by Landmine Action (UK)

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide background to facilitate discussion of core questions under item 4 of the mandate of the Group of Governmental Experts. It is also intended to provide useful information relevant to discussion of item 5 (assistance and co-operation to address the post-conflict risks of ERW). In both cases it is intended that this will give a field and donor perspective.

Explosive Ordnance Disposal – background

Explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) is the term used to describe the specific technical procedure for the detection and disposal of items of unexploded ordnance. In some instances such as the clearance of cluster bomb strikes, the procedure used is broadly similar to that used for landmine clearance although the two activities are frequently conducted in tandem and overlap. At other times it simply involves walking over the affected area searching visually for items lying on the ground. The huge variety of types of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and the wide range of conditions it can be found in, can make EOD a more technically challenging process than landmine clearance.

The actual disposal procedure usually involves the destruction of unexploded ordnance using an explosive charge. Sometimes UXO has to be destroyed where it is since moving the item may be dangerous and could result in its premature detonation; at other times UXO is gathered in a central location to be destroyed in a 'bulk demolition' (many items simultaneously). Large items such as aircraft bombs, particularly if they are close to vital infrastructure, are disposed of by a dismantling process sometimes involving the removal of the explosives for disposal elsewhere.

The EOD process in the field

The humanitarian EOD process has been developed and built on a foundation of military procedures but taking into account humanitarian priorities and objectives. In a similar way and in parallel to landmine clearance, humanitarian EOD has been developed into its present form relatively recently.

EOD operations will normally be just one component of a much wider development process and its priorities are typically driven by humanitarian need in tandem with other development activities such as the rebuilding of schools and other facilities. The most efficient EOD projects work in close association with risk awareness education (RAE) in order to develop a two-way flow of information.

RAE specialists provide information to help educate communities about the risks associated with UXO while communities provide information about where they have seen UXO and casualties that may have occurred. This is sometimes achieved by selecting and training community members to be able to deliver and reinforce the awareness message and who subsequently act as a focal point for the collation of information. This arrangement provides direct engagement with the community and creates a wider reach and capability. The information thus gathered is then used to generate a more detailed picture of the extent of UXO contamination and help prioritise EOD activities.

The EOD process is typically conducted in accordance with guidelines set out in the International Mine Action Standards developed by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and endorsed by the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Group. These help to ensure that there is consistency in the way operations are conducted and the standards that are achieved across different programmes whilst allowing sufficient flexibility for operations to be adapted to local conditions.

Wherever possible, one of the cornerstones of EOD is the creation and development of local capacity. Typically this will involve the recruitment and training of individuals drawn from within the affected communities. Those individuals with the greater potential are usually promoted to managerial positions and provided with the appropriate ongoing training. The objective is to create a capacity that has minimal dependence on international specialist input although it is usual for an international technical adviser to continue to provide technical assistance and input.

The practicalities of EOD will be dependent on the type of terrain and variety of munitions that are likely to be in the affected area. At its simplest level, for example in a flat desert environment, teams will walk in line abreast across open ground marking items they encounter which are subsequently removed or destroyed *in situ*. At the other end of the spectrum of complexity is the clearance of sub-munitions that have become partially or wholly buried in dense vegetation. In this situation the operation closely resembles that of minefield clearance with very similar procedures and methodology. Teams clear marked lanes towards the edges of the strike area until they stop finding sub-munitions and are judged to have reached ‘fade-out’ (the outer limit of a strike area).

Once an area has been declared clear there is normally an established procedure for returning control and access to the area for the local community. This is essential in order to avoid misunderstandings particularly in circumstances where there are adjacent areas still contaminated with UXO. A senior community representative will be briefed by a clearance team supervisor who will physically walk the area pointing out the extent of the clearance and any marking systems employed. A map illustrating the area cleared will usually be provided and then the community representative will be asked to sign a document confirming that the handover has taken place and that the briefing has been understood. It will also be made clear what the procedure should be if there are any further incidents or UXO encounters in the area in the future.

Funding and continuity of support

It is important for any programme to be able to rely on continuity of donor support subject to its satisfactory performance and taking account of the magnitude of the UXO problem remaining. It takes considerable energy and capital investment to generate the momentum that enables a programme to get under way. That momentum must be maintained through reliable donor support, and if it is lost may require further investment to regain it.

When the continuity of funding is interrupted, locally recruited and trained personnel have to be laid off sometimes resulting in the permanent loss of trained and skilled individuals who are forced to seek employment elsewhere. Capital investment also suffers as equipment that is not being used and maintained degenerates in the difficult environments and circumstances typical of many programmes.

In circumstances where funds are routed through, for example, a trust fund, it is vital that the mechanism for dispersal of these funds is efficient and cost-effective. Funds that have been allocated for specific programmes by donors must reach the respective implementing organisations in a timely manner.

All programmes should have an exit strategy and donors cannot be expected to support programmes indefinitely. However it is important that for the agreed lifetime of a programme, that support is continuous and reliable if earlier investments are to be protected.

Assistance in kind

The provision of assistance-in-kind is an efficient and cost-effective method for donors to contribute and mitigate against the effects of ERW. Assistance can take several forms and will typically consist of the loan of specialists or equipment.

Specialists can provide technical or managerial support to programmes in a variety of ways. The benefits can flow back to the donors as their own specialists develop their expertise and at the same time provide a continuous presence and monitoring capability from the field.

Assistance provided in the form of loans or donations of equipment can provide a shortcut towards the creation of capacity and may include such things as the hardware necessary to conduct clearance operations or more general items such as vehicles. Such assistance typically eliminates the need to identify funding for capital items at the programme level, before the purchasing and shipping process can begin, and can generate capacity more rapidly than may otherwise be the case.

For the beneficiaries of assistance the attractions include the rapid transfer of expertise and capability to an indigenous capacity which then has the potential to be efficiently replicated. The donor can also feel more secure knowing that a tangible resource has been delivered without the risks associated with providing funds directly to a programme.

Monitoring

The monitoring and auditing of programmes by informed and experienced specialists acting on behalf of donors is vital in order to protect the interests of both donors and beneficiaries.

It is not enough to rely solely on the internal quality assurance and reporting mechanisms of the respective programmes because self-evidently there is a vested interest in presenting a favourable impression. This is not to suggest that programmes are inherently flawed, rather that donors have a duty to their taxpayers to ensure that their money is being delivered effectively. From a programme perspective, third party feedback can provide fresh insight and possible enhancements to programmes.

Monitoring should ensure the integrity of funding and ensure that there is effective delivery in cooperation with wider development or rebuilding processes. If monitoring is effective then it should be possible to avoid circumstances where donors have their ‘fingers burnt’, and the risk of ‘donor fatigue’ setting in is lessened.
